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Is street art institutionalizable? Challenges to an alternative urban policy in Lisbon

1. Introduction: an “alternative” urban policy¹

- 1 In recent years, Lisbon City Council has set up a new policy towards graffiti and street art, in reaction to the artistic momentum that has been underway in urban daily life and to the growing visibility of these artistic phenomena on the city walls. On the one hand, this policy has included mechanisms for fighting and controlling these practices in some neighborhoods, particularly in the main cultural quarter of the city, Bairro Alto, most pressured by what we can call “use conflicts” (e.g. Costa, 2007) and tensions between residents and users. On the other hand, strategies and projects have been developed in order to facilitate, support and institutionalize these practices, both in specific dedicated spaces, (such as the new open-air urban art gallery established by the City Council within the limits of Bairro Alto) and in other areas of the city too.
- 2 This policy, essentially, puts together a multifaceted and quite inorganic set of public actions conducted by different city-council departments. However, in spite of all the controversy around it, this policy can be looked upon as an “alternative” urban development policy (Beal and Rousseau, 2014). It is characterized by a bottom-up approach to urban problems, which targets local communities and, more significantly, a non-mainstream segment of urban society. It seeks to establish socio-political (and cultural) regulations in order to limit uneven urban developments. It was developed in a quite decentralized way, drawing upon the interaction between some municipal technicians and the graffiti community, whilst progressively involving urban artists and local populations. The way for setting up these actions was essentially drawn through the establishment of political-administrative and “social” regulations in order to reduce tensions and control use conflicts. It implied mobilizing, through participative processes, the diverse layers of city users (residents, daily users, art communities, etc.), which have natural conflicting interests within the city. This approach required an awareness of the diverse kinds of “rights to the city” expressed in the life of each territory, and the multiplicity of “public interests”, eventually contradictory, that a city council should tackle.
- 3 Naturally, this somehow apparently paradoxical and inconsistent set of policy measures has wide and challenging governance implications. But it has also clear consequences in terms of what are the types, the forms and the quality of the public art works developed, as well as in the economic, social and cultural value that it creates in the city.
- 4 This paper aims to analyze the results of this course of action and especially its implications for urban life, local institutions and this particular art world. It seeks to understand the changes that have come about through a process of “institutionalizing” graffiti, namely the immediate socio-economic and cultural impacts on the city, and the effect it has had on graffiti artistic expression, usually free and independent in its genesis. In this way, it aims to systematize some structural issues that seem essential to (re)think alternative public policies in this specific field.
- 5 This analysis is framed within a wider research streamline in which the authors seek to examine urban interventions in public space, through the analysis of the geographies and the governance of urban art and street art within the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. This work line draws upon previous work developed by the authors on the creative dynamics in the city and its territorial patterns. Overall, these works analyzed the sustainability of the governance and regulatory mechanisms in which these creative dynamics are based on and their relation with use conflicts verified in most of these situations, particularly in its public spaces (cf. Costa 2007, 2009, 2009a, 2013; Lopes, 2012; Costa and Lopes, 2012, 2013).
- 6 In this context, our research interest focuses on urban interventions that take place in those specific public spaces. The analysis conducted in the framework of this research program

is based on a methodological approach which comprises: (i) conduction of semi-structured interviews with diverse stakeholders, involved both in the policy-making field and in the graffiti art worlds (including also academic experts in this field); (ii) extensive documental analysis of existing information (specialized blogs and literature, photographic databases, media news, and academic work); (iii) personal observation and visual recollection of the art work in the city. In this particular paper, our exploratory work specifically addresses Lisbon's street art and graffiti context and the measures taken by local authorities (particularly the City Council) regarding this field.

7 In the next section, a general description of the municipality's policy will be made, regarding both its most controlling and persecutory side and its facilitator and promoter side. This will be discussed in the light of the main features of the so-called "alternative urban development policy". In the third section, the impacts of this policy in various dimensions of urban life (economic value, symbolic reputation, social inclusion and community participation) will be discussed, in order to understand how they challenge existing urban development strategies, policy instruments and governance mechanisms. A fourth section will deal with the implications of such policies on cultural contents and on artistic expression itself, addressing the challenges that stem from the relation between urban policy and art structuring mechanisms. Finally, a brief concluding note will point out some lessons that should be learnt from this experience, which could be helpful in devising an holistic approach to public art interventions.

2. The design of a new local policy towards graffiti and street/urban art

8 In this section we briefly present the different programs conducted by the Lisbon City Council related with graffiti and street art in the city, framing their roots in light of the recent Portuguese graffiti art world evolution and the social contestation it involved. Our focus is to examine the design of this "alternative urban policy", rather than having a conceptual or empirical approach to street/urban art issues and their contemporary dilemmas.

9 Therefore, conceptual discussions around artistic interventions in public space (cf. Lopes, 2012 e Costa e Lopes, 2013) or its different characteristics and origins, do not fall within the scope of this article. Notions such as public art, urban art, street art or graffiti (among others) imply a multiplicity of discussions and subtle conceptual differences that have to be looked at from different perspectives, including: forms of public space appropriation; property rights management issues; commodification and market absorption of the arts; performativity issues; artistic intentionality; artistic backgrounds; the role of informality; artistic training issues; or even the democracy and right to the city, for example. This article will not discuss these questions, which not only have been dealt within the scope of a broader research program that includes this present article (Lopes, 2012; Costa, 2012, 2013, 2013a), but have also been deeply studied by other authors in recent years (e.g. Miles, 1997; Cartiere and Willis, 2008; Klanten and Huber, 2010; Adz, 2010; Irvine, 2012; Dickens, 2008, 2009; Traquino, 2010; Campos et al, 2011; Buser et al, 2013; Gough, 2012; Shove, 2012). Some of them have been thought within the specific field of Portuguese graffiti and street art (e.g, Campos, 2007; Ferro, 2011; Monteiro, 2011).

10 In operative terms, as far as the analytical purposes of this specific paper are concerned, a quite narrow conceptual definition of urban intervention is assumed. It solely relates to what is commonly designated as graffiti and street art, which is very similar to the concept used by the Lisbon municipality. That will be enough having regard to our plan of discussion, more deliberately focused on the "city" and the impacts "urban interventions" have, rather than addressing an "art" and "artistic intervention" approach.

11 Naturally, it is also not our intention to map or systematize street art history or all contemporary debates around it. By assuming this narrow version of street art, we are essentially drawing upon the "modern" graffiti and street art movements, which emerged in Philadelphia and New York in the late 60s and rapidly spread throughout Europe and other parts of the world. It is characterized by an appropriation of public space by a subculture (Campos, 2007) that found in

the city the ideal space for self-affirmation. As widely documented, although promptly labeled at the time as vandalism by most civil society groups, and despite the severe combat, in a matter of weeks, streets and public facilities were invaded by tags and drawings created by writers. With no artist background whatsoever, they started using sprays and pens to make their mark in the city (e.g. the classic work of Copper and Chalfant, 1984, for NY case). This appropriation of public space led to the emergence of new layer(s) of codification in the urban landscape often associated with the idea of subversion against imposed rules and defiance against capitalist society. A considerable academic debate, among several social sciences disciplines, has taken place regarding these realities (cf., e.g. Campos, 2007; Ferro, 2011), often centered on identity construction processes and on performativity issues, encompassing a social context of increasing aestheticization and stylization of everyday life (cf. O'Connor and Wynne, 1996). This focus on a specific subcultural model of urban inscription, which assumes graffiti in terms of urban identity politics, territoriality and transgression, has generated important insights into the nature of particular kinds of urban spaces and social practices. However, it has often neglected the attention towards more recent styles of inscribing the city and existing contaminations between some elite and institutional spaces, new social relations and mediascapes. This idea entails more up to date urban processes and experiences, which can be operationalized through a new 'post-graffiti' approach, privileging an emergent 'post-graffiti' aesthetic practice (Dickens 2008, 2009).

12 We stand between these two approaches, trying to understand street art local urban policy in the light of both kinds of processes, which implies considering them when debating the (economic, social, cultural) institutionalization, "commodification" and "instrumentalization" of street art and its territorial impact, keeping all these aspects in mind. This embraces, for instance, discussing the relationship between creative practice, activism and urban place-making, by assuming the porosity between cultural activism and the practice of graffiti and addressing political prospects linked to the cultivation of a globally shared aesthetics of protest and its impact on the construction of meaning in urban spaces (Buser et al., 2014). In addition, this approach also encompasses the economic institutionalization of street art (cf. Dickens, 2009, 2010; Gough, 2012), crossing contemporary art's and creative industries' "art worlds" borders; the discussion on the role of cultural intermediaries and economic mechanisms in this process (Dickens, 2010, 2009); as well as the rise of specific intermediation processes (Dickens, 2008a, 2009), which reflect broader aspects of reputation building mechanisms and gatekeeping processes on cultural activities and their impacts in urban structuring (e.g. Costa, 2012). This open-wide approach is essential to understand how local authorities cope with a more complex approach towards a creative practice that produces symbolic value, wealth and alternative urban atmosphere.

13 The Portuguese graffiti and street art scene is quite recent as it only emerged in the late 80s, essentially associated with North America's Hip Hop and Rap cultures (Campos, 2007). However, it was the proliferation of this new form of expression in the middle of the 90s, which changed the urban landscape in some parts of the city that led the Lisbon City Council to act. The plan was to take control of these informal and illegal practices and to promote the cleanliness of those spots, thus taking into consideration the persistent protests by some local actors. These actors idealize the city as a place that should be "clean" and safe from the "drafts" of a marginal social group that jeopardizes private property and abuses public space. Bairro Alto, in Lisbon (main cultural, creative and bohemian quarter of the city – cf. Costa 2007, 2009 - particularly attractive to cultural and identity expression of the subcultures), was in such condition (Campos, 2009). Its facades and urban facilities were heavily appropriated by stickers, tags and stencils produced by regulars who perceived the quarter to be an outstanding place for their work to gain visibility and reputation. By being associated with bohemia, nightlife, alternative subcultures and liminality, Bairro Alto was a great central urban spot that polarized the most reputed fringes of the metropolitan art world, attracting also international "names" such as *Banksy* or others (for a more detailed approach to the Lisbon graffiti urban scene, cf. Campos, 2007, 2009; Ferro 2011).

- 14 It is in this context, marked by huge use conflicts (most noticeable, the ones between the dwellers, owners of shops and nightlife spots, and users of the quarter – cf. Costa, 2007, 2009, 2013) that in October 2008, the hygiene department of Lisbon City Council started a program that aimed to clean the quarter’s facades. The program mostly targeted its main streets, i.e. the most visible and most appropriated ones, essentially in the more vibrant southeast area of Bairro Alto, under the slogan of “changing the image of the quarter”. The newly elected president of the City Council, António Costa, declared at the time that “those who paint the city have to understand that crime doesn’t compensate” (António Costa, Mayor of Lisbon, in Público/Agência *Lusa*, 13/10/2008), whilst promising to increase existing penalties for acts of vandalism. Along with anti-graffiti new rules, policing in the quarter was increased, a study for the installation of surveillance cameras was commissioned, a 30% increase on public lighting was pursued, a new system of cleaning the streets and waste collection was developed, and the schedule of nightlife spots (that according to the dwellers of the quarter were responsible by the untenable milieus) was restricted (cf. Costa, 2007, 2009, 2013; Costa e Lopes, 2012). This policy effectively promoted the cleaning of the facades in addition to the erasure of some drawings that had crucial value in national street art landscape, a sentiment shared almost unanimously by the stakeholders interviewed within this research, including by people working at city council departments.
- 15 Roughly at the same time, however, the City Council created the Urban Art Gallery (GAU - Galeria de Arte Urbana), under the responsibility of the Department of Cultural Heritage (DPC - Departamento de Património Cultural). Among others responsibilities, GAU was in charge of the management of a set of “outdoors” dedicated to street art, in Calçada da Glória, near one of the main entrances to Bairro Alto. This space was meant as a place for “the good art that comes there to be created” (António Costa, Mayor of Lisbon, in Público/Agência *Lusa*, 13/10/2008), therefore assuming the importance of this “new art” for the city and for the whole national art scene.
- 16 Over the last five years, the policies that were implemented by the City Council in Bairro Alto have been developed and extended to other parts of the city. On the one hand, cleaning campaigns and measures were promoted, private companies were recruited to clean and protect the facades, and “cleaning kits” were distributed to local dwellers so that they could actively keep their properties “clean” (the city council distributed kits composed by one paint roller, paint roller tray, goggles, gloves, anti-graffiti ink and varnish remover). On the other hand however (and that is probably the most interesting and innovative side of the policy), through the actions and initiatives of GAU, a progressive and consistent strategy was developed, which aimed at supporting several artistic interventions in the city and reflect on new ways of dealing with street art in diverse urban realities.
- 17 In practice, this twofold (and somehow quite schizophrenic) political strategy, with roots related to different factors and contingencies, is an attempt to appease public opinion pressures regarding use conflicts felt in some areas of the city while tackling other diffuse factors, such as aspects associated with political leadership issues, results of reflexive academic projects and different players’ personal motivations (municipality technicians, artists, gatekeepers). All these players involved, with their own individual purposes and drivers for acting, were crucial to the development of the public action. We cannot say however that these actions consubstantiate a clear strategy or policy towards the promotion of urban interventions in public space by the local authorities (which can have an important role in urban revitalization - cf. Lopes, 2012). Instead, they reflect disperse public interventions that have been developed and affirmed within the framework of complex municipal dynamics, giving expression to different policy objectives and instruments, more or less organized in departments’ actions, with distinct origins and often subject to divergent logics. It is not easy to reconcile the various interests involved, both public and private. Nor is it easy to meet the different public interests and action guidelines when outlining policy objectives, which had to articulate such a variety of policy strands, such as the promotion of urban intervention in public space vs. the management of interests and expectations of residents and users in relation to the “quality” and “hygiene” of public space, for instance. This is exemplarily expressed in the two Lisbon City Council Mayor

quotes, above cited, both made on the same occasion, and framed by the apparently paradoxical “multiple” municipal strategy. However, this strategy has progressively gained consistency and has quickly consolidated, mostly due to the action of the Department of Cultural Heritage and particularly, to the affirmation of Urban Art Gallery (GAU).

18 The GAU, as we’ve seen, arises from an attempt to manage and regulate the street art in Lisbon. As a counterpoint to the erasing program that was being conducted in Bairro Alto, the program started with the allocation of an “institutional” “legal” space for the practice of street art: an open air gallery named also GAU, located at heart of the historical city center, just near one of the main entrances to Bairro Alto. Seven outdoors, similar to those used in advertising, were placed in Calçada da Glória (supported by private and public partners, like *Friday’s Project*, *JCDecaux* and *Portugal Tourism*), intended for graffiti and street art, whilst regulated and managed by GAU’s structure. These outdoors still continue today to receive new graffiti work from different writers that enter events and competitions promoted by GAU, via open calls twice a year to submit creative ideas for that place. At the same time, however, just a few meters away, an extension of another reality manifests itself. In *Largo da Oliveirinha*, a contiguous public space (which includes walls of several private properties) also in *Calçada da Glória*, writers have been using its walls informally, though having GAU’s tacit approval, but without entering any competition or authorization.

19 The ideas explored in *Calçada da Glória* (actual site of the open-air urban art gallery), have been developed and expanded to other parts of the city in the last few years. Several projects with diverse focuses have been embraced, some of which have gained special visibility in the city (and impact in its external image), namely, project *CRONO* and project *Reciclar o olhar*.
 20 Project *CRONO* (cf.<http://cargocollective.com/Crono/Blog>) is one of the most emblematic and visible accomplishments within GAU’s action. In this project, the City Council structure became partner to the initiative developed by the association ACA (*Associação Azáfama Cidadina*), which involved some prominent names from the Portuguese graffiti art scene. These include Alexandre Farto, aka Vhils, world’s most internationally renowned Portuguese artist in this field, Angelo Milano, creator of FAME Festival, and Pedro Soares Neves, ex-graffiter and designer. The project was developed throughout the year in four separate moments, each corresponding to each season. Internationally acclaimed and influential names of the street art and graffiti art world brought several artistic appropriations to the public space, expressing “a compromise with urban art based in the premise that we are all ephemeral, as well as, all our creations” (excerpt from *CRONO* manifest). Very central urban spaces received works for example from artists such as *Gêmeos*, *Blu* or *Sam3*, who were invited by City Council and whose work can now be (still...) seen on appropriated abandoned buildings on *Av. Fontes Pereira de Melo*, one of Lisbon’s main streets. The project received considerable mediatic impact, and won extra international visibility when the graffiti by *Gêmeos* and *Blu* was considered to be among the top ten best street art works in the world, according to the newspaper *The Guardian*, placing Lisbon decisively on street art international routes.

21 The project *Reciclar o olhar* (“recycling the look”), although planned according to quite different objectives and rationale, is also one of the most emblematic GAU’s initiatives. Here, the City Council department “invited” the general public (through open calls) to paint some of the city’s “vidrões”, which are large bottle recycling containers. This more “democratic” project initiated with a couple of dozen “vidrões” but due to its success, it quickly hit several hundred units in the successive editions of the initiative that followed. Thus, around Lisbon, we can actually find paintings developed by renowned artists that are side by side with works made by amateurs, child groups or even by “70 year old ladies” (as is commonly emphasized by GAU’s executives). The painting of five garbage trucks by national writers was, at an early stage, also part of this project.

22 Naturally, it is not our intention to describe in detail all the initiatives that were sponsored or supported by GAU during these past years. However, these included: implementing social inclusion and educational oriented projects (e.g. in middle class neighborhoods – like *Telheiras* – or in more deprived communities – e.g. *Flamenga*); legalizing other new spots for art intervention; organizing regular urban art competitions; developing organized tours to urban

art circuits (e.g. Go art program) and other media oriented activities; collaborating with other city council departments (e.g. licensing urban art activities or organizing specific works, such as a wall intervention on a new municipal parking lot); and even researching, documenting and publishing work (cf. GAU's webpage, for more information on their activity: <https://www.facebook.com/galeriadearturbana>). It is important to highlight the mainstreaming and visibility that this art form achieved across the city. Throughout the five years of GAU's existence, its several projects contributed to the collection, reflection, study and dissemination of graffiti and street art in Portugal. Although inspired on similar projects conducted in other cities such as Philadelphia² or Rotterdam³, GAU's action has an innovative side, which led not only to recent requests and inquires by cities like Barcelona and Rio de Janeiro in order to put into practice similar projects, but also to the achievement of several awards⁴.

23 Summing up, a project which was at a certain extent, developed by the city council as a reactive policy *vis-à-vis* the controversy of cleaning *Bairro Alto*'s facades, has allowed for the creation of institutionalized and legal graffiti and street art spaces, just in the vicinity of the area that has been cleaned. Thus, this policy represented a starting point for a much bigger project that has been developed in the last few years, due to the action of the players involved. Naturally, this is not a strategy unanimously acknowledged or recognized by the entire community of writers, as will be made clear in the next section of this paper. Neither is it an immediate way of connecting and linking street art with more institutionalized art worlds, via increased porosity of contemporary art markets, galleries, or even academia. It is a political and technical project which was essentially triggered by a social animosity against the art world, which led to the reaction of policy makers, in multiple fronts. On the one hand, it coped with these complains, whilst on the other hand, it developed a more grassroots-oriented work with the art world and the graffiti community, towards the regulation and institutionalization of their activity. Several other debates (e.g., contestation within the street art scene, commodification and instrumentalization issues, progressive artistic legitimization by traditional academia and visual arts art worlds) that may be drawn from this policy and will be analyzed in subsequent sections, are essentially posterior to the policy intervention and not precedent to it (in this specific case). Naturally, this does not mean that these issues were not already latent or emerging in each of these fields, but it is a fact that they were greatly amplified by the institutionalization of the policy. As stated, at its core, this policy was essentially a bottom-up approach to urban development problems, targeting non-mainstream segments of the local community, and assumed a normative intervention that envisaged, even if implicitly, urban development. As such, this truly represents an alternative development policy, as defined in the previous section. In the following sections, we will discuss and try to understand what are the main consequences and challenges to the city and to the art world, which were raised by these interventions.

3. Implications for the city and its institutions: challenging urban strategies, policy instruments and governance mechanisms

24 The City Council actions described in the previous section were not neutral to the city or its actors. They have had important impacts and consequences on the urban realm, not only in artistic terms, naturally, but also in social, economic, urban and governance fields.

25 These implications can be observed and assessed in a multitude of aspects, such as: life quality of its residents and city users; jobs and economic growth that are generated; real estate value (with the appreciation and depreciation mechanisms induced by them); physical condition of buildings and their preservation; symbolic affirmation of the city (and the image of some of its neighborhoods); social inclusion and participation dynamics (enabling, eventually, empowerment and skills enhancement); expressions of groups' identities and citizenship (e.g via promotion of sense of belonging and identity, as far as both local populations and the writers and users in their appropriation of space are concerned); and best-practices achievements dissemination in terms of governance and inter-institutional

cooperation (particularly in experiences within the field of coordination and institutional articulation).

26 Our aim in this section is to discuss the way all this will impact on such diverse dimensions of urban life and in the experience of the city. For example, understanding how it promotes, for instance, economic value, symbolic reputation, social inclusion and community participation. By the same token, we wish to shed some light on how these effects reflect on the organization of the city and its different territories.

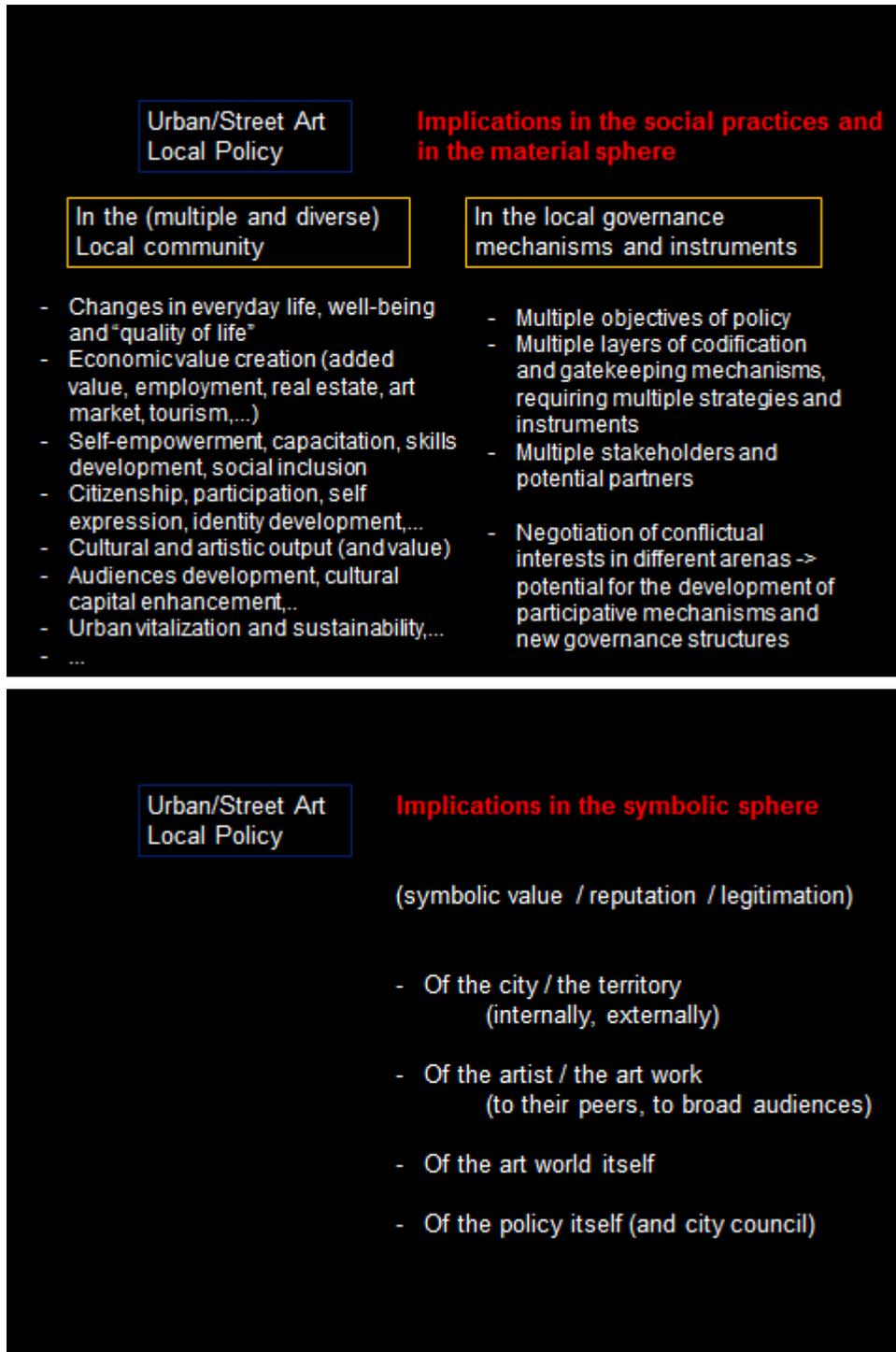
27 There are two major aspects that will be considered as our starting point for our discussion. One is that this non-neutral action of policy makers is, naturally, challenged by a diversity of perceptions and interests at the side of its potential beneficiaries. An urban/local street art policy is inevitably confronted with a wide diversity of recipients and, thus, often contradictory distinct public interests. For whom is (or should be) this policy designed and oriented? Who are its targets? City users? Local residents? Art lovers/consumers? Passers-by? Tourists? Other city users, more interested on a “clean” city, rather than on street art? Artists⁵? The art world? Building owners? Critics, gatekeepers and other cultural mediators? We have to accept the whole diversity of “local” communities (with their multiple and legitimate expectations) as final beneficiaries of a local urban policy concerning urban/street art. In effect, the city, as a place of constant interactions and multiple experiences, will never be a transversal space, as what is the basis for identity and common interest for some, is not valid for others. Moreover, distinctive mechanisms and liminality strategies are fundamental for the individual and social affirmation processes, both in the art worlds as in the subcultures and groups where these practices arise. So we are dealing with diverse existing identities within the city and the changes on the institutional assumptions regarding its image (as the ones induced by this policy) may create a new sense of belonging or local identity to residents, users and writers. Thus, it may also create opposition and conflict, as interests on opposite sides of the discussion arise. Not all residents and users of the city will accept satisfactorily this type of measures developed by the City Council, nor will all members of writer communities or other art world players, in contemporary art market, galleries and academy, for instance. The local authorities have therefore to be constantly handling these conflicts and coping with these problems and issues, both in material as in symbolic arenas, as their policy navigates on this razor's edge.

28 The second key aspect relates to the discussion on the institutionalization of street art and all the dilemmas it brings. This is a fundamental issue concerning an art expression which is rooted in public space, un-owned location that belongs to everyone, the ideal place for self-expression, away from the corset of art galleries and where all unregistered voices can leave their mark. This brings us back to the old question about having the legitimacy to define what is right or wrong, or what is art and what is not, especially within a public space that belongs to all its stakeholders. Even within the world of art galleries this is an issue: there is a predisposition of its visitors for an exchange of experiences caused by a particular work that will lead to a consideration and a qualitative opinion about the object observed. When an audience visits an art gallery, it expects to see something and accepts that condition, which is different to what happens in a public space. Public space consists of multiple layers of encoded meanings that go unnoticed to the vast majority of passers-by, and even when they are visible, they may or may not be considered art, depending on the readability of the work's message and on the cultural capital and skills of the decoder. Ultimately, we can even ask ourselves if the author wanted to produce a piece of art or not and question his own artistic intentionality, since graffiti has often, and essentially, a social or political expression at its core (cf. Campos, 2007). As Andy Warhol pointed out “art is what you can get away with”.

29 Aside from this discussion about the symbolic and artistic value of elements in public space, our interest is to focus on its impact on urban life and on the city's organization. In effect, these multiple consequences are felt in diverse aspects of urban development, such as, in the generation of economic value, the construction of symbolic values and reputations, the enhancement of inclusion and participation, the reinforcement of conflict mechanisms (both in material and symbolic arenas) or the commodification of creative and exhibition processes.

30 These questions bring an interesting set of key-challenges for the city and for the multiple agents involved, as well as for the (re)definition of urban policies. Figure 1 schematically systematizes the main identified challenges and the main controversial aspects that should be tackled by public policies in those areas. It is these key-factors that we believe are challenging the success of this specific alternative urban policy and must be subject to special attention and detailed individual analysis by public policy promoters, in each particular case.

Figure 1: Main implications of local/urban street art policy for the city and its institutions (in social practices, in material sphere, in symbolic sphere)



Source: authors' elaboration.

31 A first level of implications in social practices and in the material sphere relates to the impacts on local communities, which should be here acknowledged in its widest multiplicity and diversity. All the diverse dimensions of users' well-being and sustainable development

processes (economic efficiency, social inclusion, environmental quality, civic participation, and cultural expression) must be considered here.

32 Individually, these interventions provide well-being and quality of life to the city and to its users, to some at least. Naturally, in the perspective of the City Council, this implies managing diverse interests and conflicts, facing different values and meanings of “well-being” and “quality of life” by its citizens. This implies discussing the “urban quality” of such interventions and their impact on the different kinds of users that share that territory. Which users are they aimed at? Are they succeeding in targeting the right people? Are they really enhancing the quality of life and wellbeing of residents and/or of city users? But which ones have the right to be satisfied? In reality, for many residents, “urban quality” is ultimately and preferably linked to clean walls and to urban hygiene. Urban interventions are often assumed as negative externalities by local people, although for some, they are perceived as art. Public interest managers have therefore to permanently cope with such conflicting views: a sensation of greater quality of life and security for some; the right to freedom of expression in public spaces for others. This leads to the discussion on use conflicts among residents and users about public space, which in turn, relates with the mechanisms of appropriation of the public sphere: Which public space is convenient to intervene? Which appropriation should be enhanced? Which use conflicts exist and why are they relevant? This is a key fundamental aspect when devising and structuring an urban art local policy. In *Bairro Alto*’s case, it was effectively the polarization of different views that triggered the City Council’s involvement, the creation of GAU, and the “official” allocation of public space for street art.

33 In addition to the more pure direct artistic or aesthetic impacts, these interventions impact on the city’s economic, social, cultural and environmental activities. As a result, these intervention opportunities have to be well managed, for they have an increasing potential to create economic value, generate added value and employment, and also have indirect multiplication effects on real estate, art market and tourism, for instance. Local policy makers should be aware that these interventions (like any other artistic interventions in public or private space) are able to raise symbolic value that could be translated into economic value, which in turn is eventually passed on to the respective real estate owners (through market or through externalities – e.g. gentrification processes). As a result, policy makers naturally have to take these issues into account when making decisions, and have to position themselves in relation to this in their daily activity. Moreover, they can manage their actions by considering the parallel economic exploration potential of these issues (e.g., coping with solicitations for private partnerships, partnering with marketing and advertisement agencies and campaigns), and by acknowledging the capacity to create value (or induce value creation) in a multiplicity of businesses and value chains, from tourism to creative industries or other cultural-based market segments. Street art policies also have implications in the social sphere by enhancing self-empowerment, personal capabilities, skills development, individual empowerment, and more widely, social integration and inclusion. The actual potential in promoting citizenship, civic engagement and local community participation (e.g. Telheiras and Flamengo projects of GAU), while decreasing social conflicts, may also be within the scope of these policies. This further raises new questions and challenges as far as this field is concerned, namely, which relationship should the policy makers have with the local community and mediators/gatekeepers? To what extent should the municipality be involved as an inter-mediator? Filtering? Selecting? Promoting value and reputation? Naturally, the management of these issues, as well as the questions related with the enhancement of identities, self-expression, participation and citizenship, cannot be seen as disconnected from all the issues related to cultural and artistic outputs in themselves (and their cultural value). By the same token, the impact of these local street art policies on audience development and on cultural capital enhancement should also not be neglected. City Council policy designers need to be aware of the potential of promoting cultural/artistic participation and audience development programs (e.g. the bottle recycling containers project by GAU), both outside and inside the “art worlds”. In addition, as public authorities, they have to cope with their particular role when engaging in audience development and in the legitimization of this artistic field. Finally, it is important to

stress the impact these interventions might have also on urban vitalization and sustainability. Their potential as a source of qualification (and conservation) of abandoned, expectant or disqualified spaces bring also challenges to public authorities: Which formal or informal mechanisms can be used to promote sustainable dynamics in this field? What are the risks of increasing gentrification processes in these areas or in historical and cultural-driven areas (e.g. *Bairro Alto*), where urban art is not only mobilized to create value, but is also a source of deep territorial conflicts and uneven power relations?

34 Still within the social practices and the material sphere, a second level of impacts relates to local governance mechanisms and its instruments, including the policy's own objectives and tools. Here, we are facing a complex decision process of crossing multiple levels of action and a wide diversity of receivers. We should be aware of the policy's multiple objectives, the multiple layers of codification and gatekeeping mechanisms, which require a combination of strategies and instruments, as well as the multiple stakeholders and potential policy partners. To intervene in this field, the City Council must be aware of the various public space codification mechanisms and the multiple rationalities and objectives of the agents involved (as well as its different representations about the city and the urban "quality of life"). Moreover, it must learn how to understand and deal with the multiple layers of codification of the city and to somehow meet its citizen's diverse motivations, rationales and expectations. This implies a continuous negotiation of conflicting interests in different arenas, as mentioned, but it also represents a potential for the development of new participative mechanisms and the enhancement of (new) governance structures. This leads to the discussion on the potential of new governance practices and institutional articulations. On the one hand, within the municipality and the City Council structure (e.g. interdepartmental relations), on the other hand, between the City Council and the local community (need for dialogue, consultation and coordination with local representatives). Dealing with the potential for new governance practices (both at intra/inter-municipal levels) should be thus a crucial concern for these structures, on their daily activities.

35 A third level of impacts can be related to the implications in the symbolic sphere. These are fundamental aspects in the management of the art world, and local policy makers dealing with street art have to be conscious of all the implications their activity encompasses. Especially in regard to symbolic value reputation building and legitimation processes, where this is felt at different levels. One level is the symbolic value of the territory or of the city itself (both internally and externally). Local policy makers should be aware and manage the potential for symbolic affirmation of the city and the interest of this strategy regarding their own mission (e.g. concerning GAU activity, the enormous international visibility of *Fontes Pereira de Melo Avenue* interventions, within the scope of CRONO Project; or the importance of *Bairro Alto*'s reputation in international street art routes). To include this symbolic dimension as part of city branding strategies can be a strategic move, although too often, tourist attractiveness and symbolic mainstreaming are not (completely) compatible with reputation building mechanisms within the art world. Similarly, the impacts are naturally evident in reputation building mechanisms and legitimization processes, as far as the artist, its art work (both to their peers within the specific art world, and to broader audiences), and the art world itself are concerned. Both the symbolic affirmation mechanisms within the diverse graffitiers' communities and their visibility in the urban public space (and their geographies) should be analyzed by local policy officers and result in accordingly specific actions. Finally, the symbolic affirmation of the policy itself (and of city council action) is also at stake in these processes. The development of a local policy towards street art can be a particularly interesting stage for a City Council's government to make a political statement towards the city and its communities. This is due to the grassroots nature of the policy itself, as well as being a less conventional field for action. A reflexive approach to the potential of this policy and to the promotion/regulation of this specific artistic expression is thus essential: assessing its political potential, both internally at the city council structure (e.g. GAU department vs other structures) and vis-à-vis community (involving the reputation of the city Executive as a whole).

4. Implications for the art world: challenging the relation between urban policy and art world structuring mechanisms

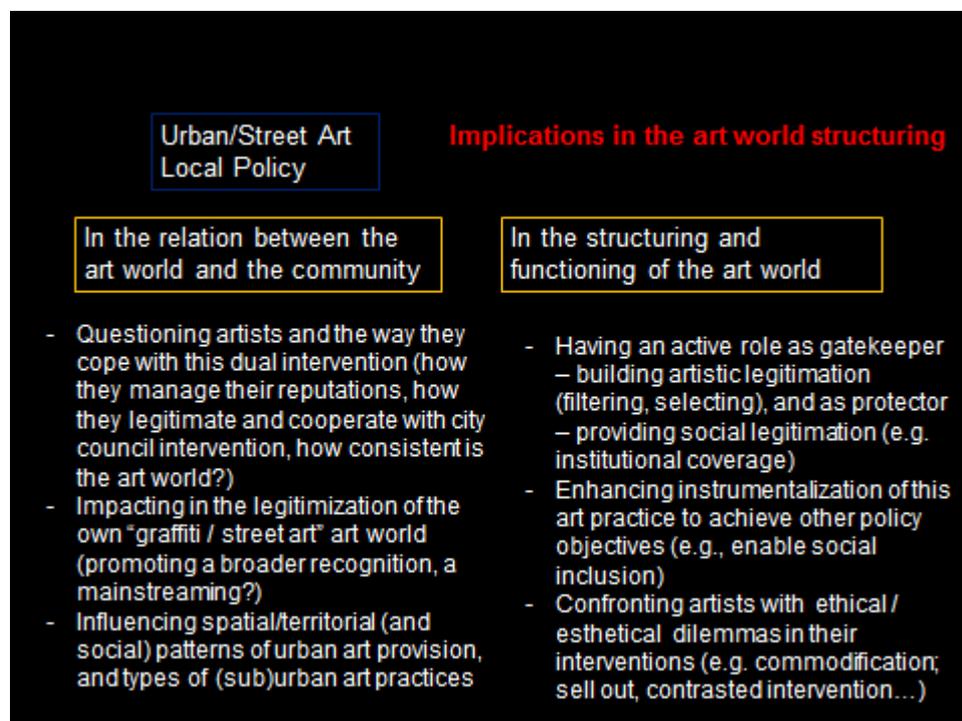
- 36 Graffiti and street art, as described in the previous chapters, is by nature an artistic expression that is not easily institutionalizable. As such, when public policies (in this case Lisbon's City Council - CML) attempt to institutionalize it, doubts naturally emerge.
- 37 In this section, we will briefly discuss how this strategic action by CML affect this specific art world and how these changes come about, including the relation with municipal policies in general. A policy aiming at the institutionalization of these artistic practices is not an easy task and it will always be, by nature, discussable and controversial, therefore needing to be furthered enquired in detail, in all its consequences.
- 38 In effect, there are several implications to consider regarding artistic quality and type of art works, artists' careers and their recognition, individual and collective work practices; or even the reputation of the art world itself. It will therefore be important to discuss, within this framework, what are the implications of institutionalizing an artistic practice that is by its own nature, anti-institutionalization.
- 39 In its beginnings, the singularity of this "art form" was the possibility to create without needing the same kind of legitimacy of other artistic worlds. It was characterized as an art that wasn't striving to be art (in the conventional sense of the term), solely looking to leave a "message", a "gesture" or an "artistic expression" in the public space; where issues, such as the physical support and the connection to the place of creation, were of paramount importance. When the City Council tries to establish sites and supports for creation, as well as selecting specific artists to work in particular areas of the city, it is clearly confronting and challenging some of the art's "genetic" ideologies and core "rules". Moreover, it is narrowing down some of the distance that existed between art that is accessible to everyone and conventional art, restricted to some. It is not an easy situation to be managed by GAU and CML: how to maintain a form of expression that handles with issues such as the concept of ownership, urban cleanliness and "unconventional" content messages? The vast majority of people who are confronted with these messages don't understand them because they are created to circulate within a world of codes and signs, where the aim is not necessarily artistic statement, but to produce a statement or pass a simple message amongst a restricted group of individuals.
- 40 It is in this context of contradictions and conflicts of use that one should analyze and understand graffiti and street art; as a form of art/expression that can assume various shapes in a city that should be capable of assimilate them, in various forms. Either legitimized or illegal, both languages coexist in the public space, communicate in diverse ways and thus have distinct purposes, intentions and different audience targets. This fact is exemplified by some of the world's greatest street artists of our time, who work simultaneously "for hire", e.g. for art galleries, whilst still carrying out their "illegal graffiti" activities. This is an essential way for them to build their reputation within artistic and not artistic realms.⁶
- 41 Debating the public space is to speak of construction, of overlapping layers of history, in permanent juxtaposition. As such, it does not make sense to think about the city as a "blank canvas" that should be kept immaculate, since it has never been so throughout history. We must therefore understand the city as a place that is being constantly built by individuals, some with more artistic projection than others, but both contributing to its evolution. Acknowledging this idea is recognizing that the city is an ephemeral place, where what is real and accepted today, will not be tomorrow. In this sense, the cleaning measures promoted by CML can be perceived as a normal proceeding. However, they accelerate the process of ephemerality that this type of art is already predisposed to. Often enough, a digital support of an artistic production, (e.g. a video or a documental photo) which quickly spreads online, via blogs and specialized sites, becomes more important than the original art piece itself, due to the speed with which these types of interventions appear and disappear from the public space.
- 42 This type of restrictive measures can, however, limit the city's initiatives to a small group of individuals, thus increasing CML's and specifically GAU's role as a cultural mediator. No

matter how righteous the public procurement may be, in the end, the work that will be chosen to be exhibited in an outdoor space, will be the "best", as if it were a "normal" piece of art that were to be purchased or brokered by an art gallery, in an attempt to create value for a capitalist market. In contrast, other GAU's projects, such as "*Reciclar o olhar*", which engaged broader audiences by allowing them the possibility to paint bottle recycling containers, were far more democratic. By adopting an "art for all" conceptual approach, due to the high number of bottle containers scattered across the city, the project provided a greater dispersion of "artistic" actors. However, because of its nature, this kind of action is not naturally compatible with reputation and art value creation mechanisms within the art world.

43 Having all these issues in mind, it would be interesting to further thoroughly understand what is the graffiter community's interpretation concerning these kinds of measures, as well as to discuss graffiti territorialisation issues by addressing different areas and intervention modes in the city. The difference in the types of graffiti found in distinct areas of the city is considerable, which indicates dissimilar spatial logics within the art world's geographic structuring mechanisms. Even the City Council's cleaning measures only took place in some specific areas of the city whilst others remained completely graffitied, which also raises the question of this being more of a policy mediatization issue than anything else.

44 Considering these different aspects, Figure 2 schematically systematizes the main identified challenges and major controversial issues that should warrant further analysis and discussion, in terms of policy (re)design purposes and their impact within the art world. Two main types of impacts were identified and should thus be recognized and worked upon, as far as art world structuring is concerned.

Figure 2: Main implications of local/urban street art policy in the art world structuring



Source: authors' elaboration.

45 The first identified set of challenges is linked to the relation between the art world and the community. Local policies towards street/urban art must take into account that City Council's interventions will always impact on the way artists develop (and reflect) their activities and on the way such creations (and such activities) are legitimated by their own art world. How artists cope with this dual intervention reality is a key issue. Artists collaborate with more "institutional initiatives" (may it be GAU, or the entrance on market circuits and other galleries) whilst still keeping their more "transgressive" and liminal activity. Many of them manage to balance their "dual" reputation fields, by not only participating on institutional events and collaborating with GAU, but at the same time, keeping their precedent illegal

graffiti activity, such as writing on walls or trains. They do this in order to feed and sustain their reputation within their “original” social and art worlds (and even, in some cases, to ensure the integrity and security of their works...), as well as to keep their expressive and artistic impulses alive. The art world itself (and its self-representations) is at stake here, and it would be interesting to pursue a discussion on the consistency of this art world (or art worlds), considering the diversity of fields of legitimation within each of these art worlds. On another perspective, the City Council’s actions also directly impact on the legitimization of the “graffiti / street art” art world in itself, through its gatekeeping effects, by engaging larger audiences and promoting a broader artistic and social recognition. This surely amplifies the reputational effects (positive and negative, in their diversity) and subsequent consequences in regard to organization, structuring, and social, economic and political recognition. These local policies also have territorial impacts, which influence the spatial patterns of the art world. In fact, increased centrality of what used to be, originally, a peripheral cultural practice (symbolically, socially, but also geographically), implies a discussion on the existence of different spatial/territorial urban art types. In other words, it is important to reach an understanding of the territorialization of urban arts and the effects of urban policy on them, by monitoring and mapping the evolution of the different (sub)urban art worlds.

46 The second set of challenges is more directly related to the structuring and functioning of the art world itself. Voluntarily or not, the City Council will always have an important role as a gatekeeper in the process (e.g. filtering, selecting, legitimizing), and should therefore reflect upon its impacts. Municipal services have a role in selecting artists and collaborators and thus interfering in reputation building processes. They become active gatekeepers from the moment they organize events, manage a gallery, intervene directly in the art world, legitimize some artists to the detriment of others, and provide institutional coverage that can be important for the development of some specific artistic processes. This raises inevitable tensions and significant challenges to be managed, which are not easy to solve insofar as the City Council should represent the general public’s interests as opposed to particular interests. At the same time, all the issues related to instrumentalization (or even domestication) of this artistic practice, in order to achieve other policy objectives (e.g. to enable and promote social inclusion, or to promote urban regeneration), have to be considered and dealt with. This topic frequently arose in all the debates about street art policies (but also on creative and cultural policies more in general). As such, this issue also has to be regularly thought out and managed consciously by policy makers, as its impact in the structuring of the art world is undeniable strong. These interventions also bring about several ethical/aesthetical dilemmas to street artists, such as commodification, the idea of “selling out” or the challenge of intervention on “hostile” sets (e.g. a bank building). Artists’ work decisions sometimes hang in the balance when it comes to facing ethic and aesthetic dilemmas such as the ones raised by the relations between transgression and commodification. An example is when an artist is invited to intervene in a building of a real estate fund and in the process of doing so he creates economic value for it. These issues should therefore also deserve the proper concern by public policy designers when dealing with street art local interventions.

5. Concluding note

47 This paper aimed to raise some features and controversial issues regarding an alternative urban policy which was set up in Lisbon towards the management of a variety of aspects related to street art and the graffiti art world. Drawing upon the experience of Lisbon City Council’s “Urban Art Gallery” (GAU), we aimed to discuss the main challenges an innovative local policy brings forth, when confronted with a complex art world and multiple layers of uses, signs, symbols and power relations that a city comprises. All these features manifest themselves in a multitude of conflicts, territorially expressed, which are naturally embedded in different public and private interests and on distinct perceptions and wills on what a city should be.

48 The expression of all these conflicting layers within the public realm demands an active urban public policy that can address and meet diverse kinds of public interests which are

inherent to many of those aspects (artistic expression, urban quality of life, urban revitalization, social inclusion, participation and civic expression, etc.). Public authorities, mandated and empowered to defend those often conflicting public interests, have to manage existing tensions with particular difficulty. Not only do they have to correspond to contradictory policy objectives and instruments, but also, increasingly, break into virgin ground, when it comes to managing uncertain impacts and acting upon less well-known complex domains, such as the functioning of these less formal “art worlds” (e.g. the “street art” world).

49 Within this framework and taking the specific case study of this local urban policy as a starting point, a set of main challenges and controversies were identified throughout this paper. They must be considered when discussing the (re)design of urban policies in this specific field, in view of the implications they bring, on the one hand, to the city and its institutions, and on the other hand, to the respective art world.

50 From this analysis resulted a conviction about the need to permanently manage the existing tensions between the process of institutionalizing graffiti and street art (inherent to these policies) and the several layers of impact that this action has on urban life and on the structuring of this art world: impact on the creative dynamics themselves (and degree of creativity and artistic value); on the artistic reputation building mechanisms; on the urban image (and on the symbolic management of the territories involved); on the economic value creation mechanisms (including real estate valorization and gentrification processes); on the social value enhancement; on the promotion of inclusion, participation and citizenship mechanisms; and on the governance of the city’s known use conflicts.

51 Having this in mind, policy strategic guidelines must take into account the need not only to cross different policies’ objectives and instruments and be self-aware of the system’s functioning, but to deeply understand the multiple implications policy actions might have in the urban system and in the art worlds. Policy makers must be conscious that managing these implications requires making choices (between diverse agents, with diverse positions, diverse rationales, diverse motivations, diverse interests), and that this entails defining policy priorities, whilst making also careful previous assessments of their multiple and different impacts. Finally, they must be aware of the need to permanently assess the different levels of these implications. As such, they should develop a continuous monitoring scheme, readjusting the strategy when needed according to real-time impacts on the city’s communities and in the art world.

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Notes

- 1 A first draft of this paper, with the title "Is street art institutionalizable? The case of graffiti in Lisbon city center", was presented to the 2012 Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, 22-26 February 2012, New York, USA. A revised version was then presented at Lisbon Street Art & Urban Creativity International Conference, Lisbon, Portugal, 3-5 July 2014, being published at DINAMIA'CET's working papers series: Costa, P., and Lopes R., (2014), "Is street art institutionalizable? Challenges to an alternative urban policy in Lisbon", DINAMIA'CET Working Papers, WP n° 2014/08. The authors express their gratitude for the participants' comments at those sessions as well as for the referees' comments to the written versions of the paper.
- 2 Mural of Arts, association established in 1984, in order to use the graffiti and street art as a "weapon" against violence in the city of Philadelphia.
- 3 Project "Rua festival" developed in Rotterdam in 2009, by Brazilian association Caramundo, which took nine Brazilian artists to Rotterdam to paint some facades.
- 4 e.g. *Ignasi de Lecea Award*, attributed by Public Art & Urban Design Observatory of Barcelona.
- 5 And are they really artists? The discussion on the "artistic" intentionality of (most) street artists would also be fundamental to have at some point...
- 6 See how this fact is assumed by "Os Gémeos" in the evocative documentary of their 2010 exhibition at CCB (Belém Cultural Center, Lisbon). Here they make a clear distinction between what they create on the streets and what they produce for an art gallery, assuming things diversely, although both equally valid.

Pour citer cet article

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Résumés

Lisbon City Council, in recent years, has promoted a new policy towards graffiti and street art. Not only has it fought to actively control these artistic practices in some central neighborhoods, but it has also, conversely, facilitated and institutionalized its practice in other specific areas of the city. In spite of its multifaceted and inorganic nature, combining a controversial set of public actions conducted by different City Council departments, this policy can be looked upon as an alternative urban development policy. It is characterized by a bottom-up approach to urban problems, which targets local communities, and more significantly, specifically a non-mainstream segment of urban society. In addition, it seeks to establish socio-political (and cultural) regulations in order to limit uneven urban development. The overall aim of this paper is to analyze the implications of this course of action and the challenges it brings forth to the design of public policies in this field. More specifically, it seeks to understand the changes that have come about by this process of “institutionalization” of graffiti, i.e. the immediate socio-economic and cultural impacts on the city, and the effect it has had on artistic expression.

Depuis quelques années, la municipalité de Lisbonne a mis en place une politique de gestion des graffitis et de l’art de rue qui combat et contrôle drastiquement ce type de pratiques dans le centre-ville, tout en facilitant et institutionnalisant ces mêmes pratiques dans d’autres secteurs de la ville. En dépit de critiques quant à son caractère hybride et protéiforme, cette politique peut être considérée comme une politique alternative de développement urbain. En effet, elle se caractérise par une approche avant tout *bottom-up* qui cible les communautés locales et en particulier un segment marginalisé de la société urbaine. Elle cherche également à établir des régulations sociopolitiques (et culturelles) pour limiter les effets du développement inégal dans la ville. L’objectif de cet article est d’analyser les effets de l’intervention publique et de comprendre les contradictions de la production de politiques publiques dans ce domaine. Il cherche plus précisément à revenir sur les processus d’institutionnalisation du graffiti, ainsi que sur l’influence des politiques urbaines sur l’expression artistique.

Entrées d'index

Mots-clés : art de rue, graffiti, art urbain, créativité, gouvernance, Lisbonne, politiques locales de la culture

Keywords : street art, graffiti, urban art, creativity, governance, Lisbon, local cultural policy